UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1997/146
21 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 18 FEBRUARY 1997 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda regarding the situation in eastern Zaire and the ever endless, baseless allegations by diverse sources against Uganda.

I would like to request you to bring the contents of the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council. I also request that the text of the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Semakula KIWANUKA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement of the Uganda Government
on the current situation in Zaire

The Government of the Republic of Uganda would like to put on record its position regarding events in eastern Zaire.

For some years it has been common knowledge that a number of rebel groups have had their bases in Zaire. In November 1996, those rebels crossed into Uganda from Zaire, thereby attacking Ugandan territory. The Uganda People's Defence Force took action to deal with that aggression. The rebels were ejected from Uganda. Today, there are no Ugandan soldiers in Zaire and the Government of Uganda has no intention whatsoever to send troops into Zaire.

Uganda is party to and accepts unconditionally the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and most especially those relating to the sanctity of international boundaries and non-interference in the affairs of our neighbours.

Uganda has no territorial ambitions, and has no interest in perpetuating conflicts currently going on in Zaire. Uganda has always been ready and is still prepared to use its full influence with all concerned to support non-violent political solutions to the existing problems.

The Government of Uganda is ready to enter into discussions with the Government of Zaire, to discuss agreements of non-aggression or any other mutually acceptable mechanism. Uganda supports the reconciliation efforts of the wise men and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Uganda is prepared for and welcomes international monitors at the border and any other confidence-building measures that will contribute to the search for a solution to these issues.

The Government of Uganda takes this opportunity to urge all Governments in the region to respect and adhere to the OAU Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international conventions relating to the rights of citizenship and nationality.

The return of stability in the Great Lakes region is in the interest of all the nations, including Uganda.

The Government of the Republic of Uganda reaffirms its commitments to the policy of good-neighbourliness with all its neighbours but reserves the right to take whatever measures are necessary to protect the lives and the property of Ugandans.

Furthermore, the attention of the Government of Uganda has once again been drawn to allegations attributed to a senior Defence Ministry official in Kinshasa, which have also been quoted extensively in the international media,

that a cargo plane carrying Ugandan troops into eastern Zaire had crashed on the Zaire side of the Rwenzori Mountain area on the night of Monday, 10 February 1997. The same Zairian official claimed that several people had died in the crash and that survivors were captured by Zairian troops who were allegedly around the crash site. He also tried to cite this as evidence of Ugandan involvement in the Zaire civil war.

In this regard, the Government of Uganda wishes once more to deny any involvement in Zaire, including the above accusation, and state categorically that no Ugandan aircraft or personnel have flown into or are engaged in the war in eastern Zaire.

There is only one plane which flies between Entebbe and Kisangani. That plane is used by the World Food Programme to carry humanitarian relief items. It is owned by a private company called Scibe - a Zairian-based company. The plane itself is Zairian-registered. That plane flew to Kisangani, returned safely and clocked in at Entebbe Airport at 7.39 p.m. on 11 February 1997.